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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography offers a sampling of a wide variety of viewpoints on the topic of school choice. Fourteen references selected for annotation, ranging from a 3-page journal article to a 266-page book, are listed at the beginning of the bibliography. Among the viewpoints that different authors represent are the following: (1) unlimited or highly structured choice; (2) students choosing, as well as parents choosing; (3) transportation costs met by public funds or being the sole responsibility of the parent; and (4) choice within the district, or between districts, including or excluding private schools and higher education institutions. (MLF)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

PROGRAM REPORT

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Leslie Crohn

Kenneth H. Hansen

January 1990

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Public School Choice:
A Selected Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

This bibliography is intended to be helpful to the reader who is seeking information about the meanings attached to the popular proposal for restructuring American education which goes by the generic name, "Choice." The meanings which different authors give to this often ill-defined term vary greatly--unlimited or highly structured choice; students choosing, as well as parents choosing; transportation costs met by public funds or being the sole responsibility of the parent; choice within the district, between districts, including or excluding private schools and higher education institutions--the varieties are numerous, and each one means "choice" to some proponent.

"Choice" as a public policy in education has aroused strong--sometimes impassioned--feelings on the part of both proponents and opponents. The sharp differences of viewpoint suggest that no one writer has the answer (although persons on both sides of the fence seem to think they do!), and that the jury of popular opinion has not yet rendered a verdict.

Therefore, this bibliography proposes not to solve the problem for the reader, but to offer the reader a fair sampling of a wide variety of viewpoints, informative if not always wholly convincing.

As is true of all bibliographies, this one is intended not to substitute for the original writings, but to point the interested reader to materials which can be perused for further information and fuller interpretations of the viewpoints so briefly summarized here.

References Selected for Annotation

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A State Policy Maker's Guide to Public School Choice (1989, April). Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 61pp. 1

Choosing a School for Your Child (1989, May). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 30pp. 3

Clinchy, E. (1989, December). "Public School Choice: Absolutely Necessary But Not Wholly Sufficient." Phi Delta Kappan, (71)3, pp. 289-294. 4

Elmore, F.E. (1986, December). Choice in Public Education. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 40pp. 5

Hansen, K.H. (1989, September). "Choice" in Education: Politics, Pedagogy, and the Public Good: A Policy Issues and Options Paper. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 12pp. 6

Hansen, K. H. (1985, December). Choice Within the System: An Issue Analysis Paper. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 11pp. 9

Hawkins, A. (1989, October 12). "Educational Choice: Panacea or Cheap, Quick-Fix to A Complex Problem." Presented before the Education and Labor Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 10

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Nathan, J. (1989, July). Progress, Problems, and Prospects of State Educational Choice Plans. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation, 33pp. 14

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Uchitelle, S. (1989, December). "What it Really Takes to Make School Choice Work." Phi Delta Kappan, (71)3, pp. 301-303. 20

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A State Policy Maker's Guide to Public School Choice (1989, April). Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 61pp.

- This policy guide pulls together information on the types of public-school choice plans being implemented or debated across the nation.

- Public-school choice is defined as one step toward restructuring the school system; many options are necessary in the movement to improve and redesign the way students are educated.

- At an accelerating pace, state policy makers are considering public-school choice as a policy tool to foster school restructuring.

- Twenty states are actively involved in deliberations on, or implementation of, some kind of public-school choice plan.

- Public-school choice reflects themes learned from corporate restructuring such as competition, decentralization, employee empowerment, incentives, and better accountability measures: more accountability for schools as parents and students vote with their feet; decentralization as more responsibility is given to the school site to make its program attractive to students; competition as schools, and sometimes colleges, compete for students.

- For public-school choice to be an effective policy tool, it must be coupled with other school restructuring efforts and provide incentives for schools and districts better to meet national, community, and individual educational needs.

- Public-school choice draws on two important strands of public interest: support for more family freedom and a desire for greater educational equity.

- Research has uncovered six different kinds of public-school choice plans: (1) interdistrict; (2) postsecondary options; (3) second chance; (4) controlled choice; (5) teacher-initiated; and (6) magnets.

- **Interdistrict: emphasizes the right to choose a public school in any district.**

  -- In an interdistrict choice plan, families can choose public schools located in districts other than the one in which they live.

  -- In a statewide plan, access to these districts generally is limited only by available space and state desegregation standards--receiving districts may not screen applicants on the

basis of sex, race, ethnicity, academic and developmental needs, or socioeconomic status.

-- In metropolitan plans designed to achieve desegregation, racial-balance guidelines have priority.

-- States with interdistrict choice plans: Minnesota's Open Enrollment Plan, Massachusetts.

o **Postsecondary options: allows high school students to choose between high schools and postsecondary institutions.**

-- Postsecondary institutions participate on a voluntary basis and set the standards for admitting students, subject to state guidelines; interested students apply to the institution they wish to attend; if accepted, they may attend that school on a full-time basis or split their schedule between higher education and the high school; state per-pupil funding is shared between the two institutions in proportion to the amount of course work taken in each.

-- States with postsecondary options: Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options Plan, Colorado's Dual Enrollment Program, and Colorado's Postsecondary Enrollment Options Plan.

o **Second-chance: allows poorly performing students and dropouts to choose other educational settings.**

-- Goal is to give students a chance to be in control of their lives by allowing them to start over.

-- Eligible students are offered some or all of the following options: (1) attend another public school in either their own or a different district; (2) choose an area learning center or other alternative education option in their own or another district; (3) enter a postsecondary institution; or (4) enroll in a private, alternative, nonsectarian program which has a contract with a local school board.

-- States with second-chance programs: Minnesota's High School Graduation Incentives Program, and Colorado's Second Chance Program.

o **Controlled choice: makes all families choose among all district schools subject to racial balance guidelines.**

-- Form of intradistrict choice that fosters two interrelated purposes: the voluntary desegregation of a community's schools and the strengthening of each school by giving its staff responsibility for improving quality.

-- Invented in 1981 to resolve the desegregation problems in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

- -- Its success prompted four other Massachusetts cities to adopt the plan: Fall River, Lowell, Lawrence, and Boston; Seattle, Washington, and San Jose, California also have implemented controlled-choice plans.

- o **Teacher-initiated: attracts families to diverse schools whose goals they share.**

  - -- Endorses a bottom-up philosophy of school improvement; teacher-initiated schools are usually cooperatively managed by staff to carry out their shared vision.

  - -- Example found in East Harlem, New York; two schools grew into a system of 30 "options" available to families in addition to regular neighborhood-zoned schools.

- o **Magnets: allows a small number of families to attend a handful of special schools.**

  - -- Often used as part of an urban desegregation plan to promote racial balance, magnet schools have open-enrollment policies for a limited number of students throughout the district who share a particular interest or educational philosophy.

  - -- Usually created from the top down.

Choosing a School for Your Child (1989, May). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 30pp.

- o Presents a step-by-step process for parents who want to find the best school for their child; includes a checklist of questions for parents to ask schools when they visit.

  - -- Options for parents include: neighborhood public schools, public "schools of choice," church-affiliated and other private "schools of choice."

  - -- Step 1: Think about what, as a parent, you want a school to do for your child; consider the child's personality, family's beliefs, values, and morals; find out about community offerings.
  - -- Step 2: Collect information on available schools, including curriculum, school philosophy, school policies (discipline, homework, grades and feedback, opportunities and incentives for teachers, admissions), proof of results (test scores, attendance rates, turnover and graduation rates, postgraduation activities, special achievements), school facilities, school staff, parent and community involvement, reputation of the school, educational consultants.

  - -- Step 3: Visit the school and look for clean, orderly, pleasant environments.

  - -- Step 4: Enroll the child (go through the application process).

Clinchy, E. (1989, December). "Public School Choice: Absolutely Necessary But Not Wholly Sufficient." Phi Delta Kappan, (71)3, pp. 289-294.

- The movement toward public school choice poses some serious concerns: (1) many states and school systems are riding the tidal wave of choice with little thought and virtually no planning; and (2) there is the danger that choice may be oversold as a magical solution to all the problems that afflict public schools.

- Yet parental and professional choice, when properly conceived and executed, are necessary because they turn our traditional auuthoritarian system of public education upside down, leading to genuine change, real reform, true restructuring.

- Choice requires that we abandon the notion that there can be a single, all-inclusive definition of "educational excellence": what is needed is genuine diversity--a range of educational options that extends from preschool through high school--precisely what many of the school systems riding the crest of the wave of choice are not providing (in most cases, neither parents nor teachers and principals have been involved in making decisions about what choices the school system will offer).

- Once a system of truly diverse schools has been created, each one of them should be given the power to determine its educational philosophy, its curriculum, and its organization and governance structure, to choose its teaching and administrative staff, and to set its own spending priorities (site-based management principles).

- To achieve both choice and educational excellence, there must also be an overriding concern for educational equity: all forms of choice must be carefully controlled to make sure that every parent and every student has an equal chance to benefit from the advantages that choice confers.

- The role of central administration is to "orchestrate diversity": (1) set common educational goals for all schools and all students (but not the ways in which these goals will be met); (2) make sure that parents, older students, teachers, and principals all played a role in making the decisions about the creation of a full range of diverse schools and can now freely choose the schools they want; and (3) guarantee that poor and minority students and their parents are fully empowered to take advantage of everything that diversity and choice can offer them.

- There will be new costs involved in reorganizing the existing system, in creating the new schools that will be required to achieve true diversity, and in creating parent information and support systems; there also will be new costs for transporting students.

- There are other necessities that diversity and choice do not guarantee to provide: adequate salaries for teachers, better

working conditions in schools, decent school facilities, health and social services needed to help poor and minority children break the cycle of poverty and disadvantagement.

Elmore, F.E. (1986, December). Choice in Public Education. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 40pp.

- The issue of choice in public schools currently has high political visibility and is debated in various contexts: the political debate is polarized between those who propose a regulated voucher system and those who defend the current locally centralized system.

- A set of assumptions about the effect of individual choice on the responsiveness and performance of schools underlies the argument for increased choice in education:

  -- Parents are more likely to be satisfied with a school they have chosen and to support their children's learning in such a school.

  -- Students are more likely to work at schooling more seriously when they (and their parents) have chosen the kind of school that they find appropriate to their needs.

  -- Teachers are more likely to enjoy their work and make the necessary commitment for successful teaching when they have chosen the setting in which they work and have been given an active hand in the construction of their school program.

- Though neither of the two extreme alternatives to education--a private market for education or a complete public monopoly--is defensible in theory or in practice, there is a great deal of latitude for enhancing choice in the existing system; there is ample justification for both increased client choice in public education and a strong public role in enhancing and constraining that choice.

- Policy makers need to consider the following policy options as they apply to a system of choice:

  -- Policies affecting choice must be evaluated from both the demand and the supply side. Providing consumers with greater educational choice while at the same time constraining the ability of educators to respond to consumer preferences will only increase dissatisfaction with schools.

  -- Policies affecting choice must take into account the broader public aims of education, in addition to the individual preferences of consumers and providers. These aims include providing a strong basic education for every school-aged person.

  -- The implementation of policies affecting the four major elements of the educational system (finance, attendance, staffing, content) can provide policy makers with a wide range

of options for enhancing and constraining choice. Various combinations of these elements correspond to distinctive forms of organization. The current system of local bureaucratic centralization represents only one of a large number of possible ways of organizing public education.

-- There is little evidence that greater choice for consumers and providers of education, will by itself, dramatically change the performance of schools. But there are still substantial reasons for policy makers to consider initiating experiments in enhanced choice.

Hansen, K.H. (1989, September). "Choice" in Education: Politics, Pedagogy, and the Public Good: A Policy Issues and Options Paper. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 12pp.

- o "Choice" applied to education is often only tangentially related to educational issues; it is often used to promote political change in the governance, financing, and purpose of American public education.

- o When discussing "choice" in education, it is necessary to consider three related issues: (1) the agendas of the proponents; (2) the probable pedagogical results (changes in the actual practices of the teaching/learning process); and (3) the implications of the various "choice" strategies for the good of the social order.

- o Any serious and rational examination of the issues involved in choice necessitates identifying the various motivations which appear to be involved:

  - -- Political gain: it is politically hazardous to go against what the public seems to want (this applies to elected public officials, state and local boards of education, administrators, community leaders, and members and officers of professional organizations).

  - -- Privatization: there are many who believe that the salvation of our country (and the education system) lies in getting the government off the backs of its citizens and allowing opportunities for private groups to compete.

  - -- Saving money: some advocates of choice view the idea as a way to save money by allowing parents to choose the "good" schools, thereby forcing the "bad" schools out.

  - -- Support for nonpublic education: many advocates want opportunities for private schools to compete on an even basis with the public schools for support and for students (these groups are reluctant to say outright that nonpublic education deserves public support, specifically through a voucher system).

  - -- Fear and prejudice: a subtle and often well-concealed reason for supporting parental choice of schools is the fear of

"outsiders"; choice is seen as a way to subvert racial and socioeconomic integration.

-- Power shift: many advocates of choice (parents, special-interest groups, teachers, political leaders) feel that their own educational agendas would be advanced if parents could just choose, as choice would guarantee input from the "people," thereby moving control of the schools into the hands of the governor, the legislature, the mayor, or whomever is speaking.

o Options for choice within the public school system include:

-- Choice within a building (schools within schools, fundamental schools, mini-schools, schools with strict dress codes, etc. for elementary levels; storefront locations, less-structured programs, specialty schools, etc. for secondary levels).

-- Choice within the district (transportation becomes a problem and possibilities of uninformed parental choice and the likelihood of resegregation are of increasing concern).

-- Interdistrict choice (problems are raised with transportation costs, draining of districts with already limited resources, and athletic eligibility).

o Choice outside the public school system raises serious issues:

-- Private schools vary greatly in the quality of programs offered; there is no guarantee that the educational needs and desires of either the student or the parents will be better served.

-- Private school attendance is an expensive option, and there is little reason to believe the public should foot the bill.

-- A great number of private schools are church related, which could result in the "impermissible degree of entanglement" judged unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

o Whatever degree of support or opposition is given to the choice movement, it must so far be based on anecdotal evidence and speculation, not on any conclusive body of serious research.

o Choice in itself, should it become the norm, would probably only have marginal effect on how classrooms and schools operate, but it could well have positive benefits in increasing involvement and opening up learning options.

o A few of the problems associated with the educational choice strategy include:

-- Unbalancing of educational opportunities: the schools most favored (whether for sound or unsound reasons) could

conceivably syphon off the "top" students and teachers and garner the most fiscal support.

-- Divisiveness: the result of the most proposed choice programs would be to set up two virtually separate school systems--one for the poor, minorities, the place-bound, those needing special programs, and another for the more economically advantaged, more academically able, more mobile, more ambition-driven.

-- Undermining professional cooperation: teachers who develop superior methods and materials would be more inclined to not share, but to use them to gain a competitive edge.

-- Excess cost: additional monies would be required for transportation, information services, and likely duplication of programs; the social costs of choice in terms of socioeconomic stratification, poor choices, and limited offerings would be unacceptably high.

-- Who goes? Who stays?: what are the implications if the choices made tend to overload, deprive, or warp the program of either the sending or receiving school?

-- Resegregation: this is probably the most severe choice problem to be faced: quotas devised to maintain racial balance are only a partial solution.

-- Transportation: without provision for free transportation, there is little free choice.

-- Impoverishment: schools not chosen are going to be hurt; those needing the best instructional staff and leadership and the strongest financial support will end up at the bottom of the system.

-- Uninformed choice: test scores, dropout figures, the reputation of the school, self-serving promotion by the school seeking more students are unreliable bases for choice; uninformed choice is blind choice.

o Though it may be impossible to reach agreement on the social, economic, and political issues involved, there is a strong possibility that a few educational principles could be agreed upon:

-- The fundamental reason for supporting choice is to make high quality educational programs available to every student.

-- An important reason for promoting choice is to give parents, teachers, and to some extent, students, more say in the educational programs and processes.

-- No choice programs should permit resegregation or unnecessarily divide the students into distinct social classes.

-- Real and substantial differences among programs must be encouraged and established among the programs offered for choice; unless there are differences, there is no real choice.

Hansen, K. H. (1985, December). Choice Within the System: An Issue Analysis Paper. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 11pp.

- o Parental choice is consistent with the principles underlying the American social and political system and has been firmly upheld by Supreme Court decisions.

- o Choice is seen as benefitting **parents** (they have a direct voice in the way schools are run) **students** (they respond favorably to having a choice of schools or programs within a school) and **teachers** (they can seek assignment to a particular kind of school from a variety of educational approaches).

- o This paper addresses the range of policy options in providing choice within the system at the state and local levels.

- o Examples are given of the growing number of proposals for far-reaching state-level promotion of educational choice within the public school system:

  -- Minnesota (provides state authorization and state support in the form of educational vouchers which can be used by parents to place their children in schools other than the site of normal enrollment at the college level, including nonpublic institutions)

  -- Colorado (allows students who have been unsuccessful in school a second choice by subsidizing their transfer to schools outside their normal attendance area, including vocational schools)

  -- South Dakota (offers parents residing in school districts with a high school enrollment of fewer than 45 students an opportunity to send their children to a larger high school in an adjacent district; tuition is paid by the state)

  -- Washington (by vastly liberalizing the standards for home instruction, offers a parental choice opportunity that takes the child out of the public school but does not involve private school attendance)

- o Decision makers need to balance the negatives of statewide choice programs against the perceived values of such programs: for example, issuing vouchers is closely identified in the public mind with the concept of providing public support for private education.

- States may wish to examine options other than basic fiscal restructuring such as:
  - -- Allowing/encouraging local districts to set up separate kinds of schools at the local level
  - -- Allowing/encouraging local districts to alter normal attendance rules and patterns to provide parents choice within a district
  - -- Relaxing local adherance to prescribed state standards for curriculum content, textbook selection, core requirements
  - -- Allowing the local board a greater latitude in making decisions regarding choice
  - -- Providing optional ways through which local schools can seek and gain accreditation
- Local districts can establish provisions for effective policies in choice programs in four areas:
  - -- Choice of attendance area
  - -- Choice of teacher
  - -- Specialized schools including alternative schools and magnets
  - -- Choice within the curriculum (relaxation of the growing curricular rigidity).

Hawkins, A. (1989, October 12). "Educational Choice: Panacea or Cheap, Quick-Fix to A Complex Problem." Presented before the Education and Labor Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

- Educational choice programs do not address the federal government's responsibility to ensure accountability, equity, and a quality education for all students.
- "A Nation at Risk" (1983) did not find that a school or district is at risk, but that a nation is at risk; moving students from school to school or district to district does not guarantee a quality education.
- Real school improvement occurs when comprehensive, systematic school improvement plans have been developed that are tied to the curriculum; the School Improvement Act of 1988 provides assistance to all schools that will help them in this effort.
- Reordering national priorities and placing education at the top along defense and space will assure that adequate resources are made available and the needs of the nation's young people are addressed.

Marks, W. (1989, December). "System for Choice: A Program That Really Works." Thrust for Educational Leadership, (19)3, pp. 35-37.

- The Richmond Unified School District, California, has been transformed, through A System for Choice, from a poorly performing, financially troubled school district into one with improved academic achievement and attendance, increased parent and staff involvement, and financial solvency, in less than three years.

- In A System for Choice, students in Richmond are offered options from primary grades through high school, and if they fail to find an emphasis they like, there are ten Alternative Education Programs to choose from:

  -- Stop Drop: a recovery program for dropouts.

  -- Alternative Ed Work Center: a recovery program that emphasizes GED and job placement.

  -- Continuation School: a program for 9th-12th grade students which requires a minimum of 15 hours per week toward a high school diploma.

  -- North Campus: a high school level program which allows a combination of core classes, independent study and computer lab instruction leading to a diploma and job internship.

  -- Contra Costa College Middle College High: an opportunity for high potential/at-risk students in grades 9-12 to be enrolled at high school and college concurrently.

  -- Independent Study/Modified Independent Study: a program for grades 7-12 allowing students to complete 20 hours of instruction per week at home.

  -- Opportunity Classes: a grade 7-9 plan for students with academic and disciplinary problems.

  -- Cluster Academy: schools within schools for socially promoted students at junior high and high school sites.

  -- Elementary Alternative Classes: grade K-6 classes designed for nonspecial-education students with severe discipline problems.

  -- Elementary Home Study: for K-6 students who receive instruction at home by their parents.

- Results to date include the following:

  -- District achievement scores outstripped that of the state as a whole at all levels tested (grades 3, 6, and 8).

- -- Unexcused absences dropped 50 percent.
- -- Student suspensions dropped 60 percent.
- -- Enrollments went up.
- -- Richmond was honored by the U.S. Department of Education.
- -- Local institutions of higher education have become active participants.
- -- Business leaders have offered support, including financial.

Moore, D. & Davenport, S. (1989, August). "Cheated Again: School Choice and At Risk." The School Administrator, (46)7, pp. 12-15.

- o In a two-year research study, Designs for Change analyzed school choice programs at the high school level in four cities: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston.
- o The study included more than 300 interviews and an analysis of school system data about which students end up in certain schools.
- o The results of the study are disturbing: in the school systems studied, school choice has typically become a new improved method of student sorting, in which schools pick and choose among students.
- o In the sorting process, black and Hispanic students, low-income students, students with low achievement, students with absence and behavior problems, handicapped students, and limited-English proficient students have very few opportunities to participate in popular options schools and programs.
- o The at-risk students are instead concentrated in schools where their fellow students are minority, low-income, and have a variety of learning problems.
- o Educators who are currently carrying out school choice programs or are considering whether to set them up should take stock of the dangers they raise for at-risk students.
- o Options programs work as sorting machines in subtle ways; they typically:
  - -- Have complex admissions procedures best understood by middle class families.
  - -- Use both stated and unstated admissions criteria, many of which screen out at-risk students.
  - -- Often recruit aggressively and in person at middle-class public and private schools.

- -- Often do not provide services for the handicapped and limited-English proficient students.

- o The research study findings indicate that the growth of options schools and programs was not stimulating neighborhood schools to improve, but further undermining their chances to be effective:

  - -- Options programs siphon off the most capable students, teachers, and parents from neighborhood schools.

  - -- Neighborhood schools frequently receive fewer resources than options programs, even though they are dealing with the most difficult-to-educate students.

  - -- Options programs typically have definite enrollment limits, and they can make clear paths for the coming year because their teaching staff and student body are essentially set by early summer; in contrast, neighborhood high schools must deal with a constant process of student enrollment and withdrawal that puts major stress on their effectiveness.

  - -- The growth of options has created a prevalent feeling of demoralization among educators, students, and parents in neighborhood schools who have come to feel like "secondhand goods."

- o If options have any chance for transcending their current role in big cities as new improved sorting machines, they need to be restructured based on the following recommendations:

  - -- Procedures should be established through which active parents and advocates of students at risk can participate in decision making about the quality of these students' educational experiences, including the design and implementation of school admissions.

  - -- School districts should institute moratoriums on the development of additional options schools and programs, pending a review of systematic data about their quality and impact.

  - -- All aspects of the admissions process should be subject to strong systemwide rules and aggressive enforcement, with parents and advocates of students at risk having decision making roles in the design and oversight of these programs.

  - -- The basic assumption of the admissions process for options schools and programs should be that students have a right to apply based on interest and that the school or program has a positive responsibility to ensure a student body representative of the school system as a whole.

  - -- As part of a comprehensive review of the role of options, the school district should identify and eliminate or minimize

detrimental impacts of high school options on nonselective schools in such areas as loss of capable students, loss of capable staff, resource inequities, and formal or informal procedures for sending students back to their neighborhood schools.

Nathan, J. (1989, July). Progress, Problems, and Prospects of State Educational Choice Plans. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget, and Evaluation, 33pp.

- This report describes the dramatic progress of a simple concept: that families should be allowed to choose among distinctive public schools that educators have developed.
- Recent developments in four broad areas are examined:
  - The public's interest in allowing families to select among public schools.
  - The responses of states and the federal government to this growing interest.
  - New research on existing programs that permit choice.
  - Prospects for expansion of state efforts to promote choice among public schools.
- Definitions are offered:
  - **Local options**: local public school districts offer magnet schools or alternative programs from which families can select what they want for their children.
  - **Open enrollment (limited)**: certain students may attend public schools outside the district in which they live; the state pays the cost and no permission is required from the resident board of education.
  - **Open enrollment (comprehensive)**: students K-12 may attend public schools outside the district in which they live; the state pays the costs and no permission is required from the resident board of education.
  - **Open enrollment (metropolitan)**: the state permits one- or two-way movement between an urban district and surrounding suburban districts in order to promote desegregation/integration and higher quality education.
  - **Postsecondary options (limited)**: students may attend postsecondary programs with permission of the local district; state or local funds pay all or part of costs, or as in Rhode Island, the state requires some formal action of the district.

- -- **Postsecondary options (comprehensive):** students may attend postsecondary programs; state or local funds pay all tuition and fees; the local board may not decide which students may participate or which courses they may take. (Note: many states permit students to take postsecondary courses and receive dual credit if the students pay for them; most of these states permit districts to pay for postsecondary courses if the districts think the students are ready to take such courses; neither of these options is considered in this report to be real encouragement from the state for more choice.)

- -- **Program Development:** the state provides funds explicitly to help school districts plan and to develop different kinds of full-day public school options.

- -- **Specialty School:** a statewide or regional magnet nine-month school that draws from several districts and is funded by the state.

- -- **Tax Deduction or Credit:** families are allowed to claim a deduction or credit on their state taxes for costs associated with education of their children.

- -- **Tuitioning:** state funds to public and private nonsectarian programs for certain students.

o A summary of state offerings is given:

- -- Alabama: Specialty School, Local Options
- -- Alaska: Specialty School, Local Options
- -- Arizona: Limited Open Enrollment, Limited Postsecondary Option, Local Options
- -- Arkansas: Comprehensive Open Enrollment, Local Options
- -- California: Program Development, Tuitioning, Limited Open Enrollment, Local Options
- -- Colorado: Statewide Postsecondary Options, Limited Open Enrollment, Local Options
- -- Connecticut: Metropolitan Open Enrollment Program Development, Local Options
- -- Delaware: No initiatives
- -- District of Columbia: Program Development, Local Options
- -- Florida: Limited Postsecondary Options, Local Options
- -- Georgia: Local Options
- -- Hawaii: Local Options
- -- Idaho: Local Options
- -- Illinois: Specialty School, Program Development, Local Options
- -- Indiana: Local Options
- -- Iowa: Comprehensive Open Enrollment, Limited Postsecondary Options, Tax Credit, Local Options
- -- Kansas: Limited Postsecondary Options, Local Options
- -- Kentucky: Local Options
- -- Louisiana: Specialty School, Local Options
- -- Maine: Limited Postsecondary Options

- -- Maryland: Program Development, Local Options
- -- Massachusetts: Metropolitan Open Enrollment, Program Development, Local Options
- -- Michigan: Specialty Schools, Local Options
- -- Minnesota: Limited Open Enrollment, Comprehensive Postsecondary Options, Comprehensive Open Enrollment, Tax Deduction, Local Options, Program Development
- -- Mississippi: Specialty School, Local Options
- -- Missouri: Metropolitan Open Enrollment Program Development, Local Options
- -- Montana: Local Options
- -- Nebraska: A 1989 law allows movement for K-12 students in public schools across district lines so long as the transfer does not harm desegregation efforts and receiving districts have room; the law is being phased in beginning with the 1990-91 school year; Local Options
- -- Nevada: Local Options
- -- New Hampshire: No initiatives
- -- New Jersey: Local Options
- -- New Mexico: Local Options
- -- New York: Program Development, Local Options
- -- North Carolina: Specialty Schools, Local Options
- -- North Dakota: No initiatives
- -- Ohio: Local Options, Comprehensive Open Enrollment
- -- Oklahoma: Program Development, Local Options
- -- Oregon: Limited Postsecondary Options, Tuitioning, Local Options
- -- Pennsylvania: Local Options
- -- Rhode Island: Program Development, Limited Postsecondary Option, Local Options
- -- South Carolina: Specialty School, Local Options
- -- South Dakota: Local Options
- -- Tennessee: Local Options
- -- Texas: Local Options
- -- Utah: Limited Postsecondary Option, Local Options
- -- Vermont: Tuitioning
- -- Virginia: Specialty Schools, Program Development, Local Options
- -- Washington: Limited Open Enrollment, Limited Postsecondary Option, Tuitioning, Local Options
- -- West Virginia: Local Options
- -- Wisconsin: Program Development, Metropolitan Open Enrollment, Local Options
- -- Wyoming: Local Options

- o Summary of research on public school choice shows that although plans differ, the most effective plans have the following common elements:

  - -- A clear statement of the goals and objectives for all schools and their students

  - -- Information and counseling to help parents select among various programs for their children

- -- Student assignment and transfer policies that do not discriminate against students on the basis of past achievement or behavior

- -- Nondiscriminatory admission policies that draw from a wide spectrum of students; not "first-come-first-served" admission procedures

- -- Opportunities for educators in the schools to help create programs

- -- Available transportation within a reasonable area for all students, with a priority given to those coming from low-income and non-English speaking families

- -- A requirement that dollars should follow students (i.e., sending and receiving institutions should not both receive funding)

- -- Procedures that promote more desegregation and integration among students

- -- Provisions for continuing oversight and modification

Nathan, J. (1989). Public Schools by Choice: Expanding Opportunities for Parents, Students, and Teachers. Bloomington, IN: Meyer Stone Books, 266pp.

- o Expanding parental and educator choice among public schools is a central, critical element of improving American education--it permits the freedom educators want and the opportunity students need, while encouraging the dynamism which the public education system requires.

- o The book is written for parents, educators, business people, governors, and legislators who want to increase student achievement, reduce the percentage of students who drop out, and improve educators' morale.

- o First section of the book offers a rationale for choice among public schools, based on research and theory.

- o Second section offers experience from several states and districts which have expanded choice among public schools:

  - -- New York District #4, probably the nation's best known and honored public school options program is described: the program has had enormous impact on East Harlem's inner-city, economically depressed neighborhood.

  - -- Cambridge, Massachusetts, where "controlled choice" has been offered to help stimulate needed improvements.

- -- Minnesota's Postsecondary Options program, where the law permitting high school juniors and seniors to attend college and university courses has produced remarkable benefits both to participating students and to those who decided to continue taking courses at the high school.

- -- Tallahassee, Florida's public alternative school, selected by Florida's Commissioner of Education as one of the best schools in the state.

- o Last section looks ahead and shows how choice complements other reform strategies; ten points about choice are discussed:

  - -- Public school choice is a bi-partisan issue, supported by liberals and conservatives.

  - -- While nothing will solve all of education's problems, expansion of choice among public schools should be a central part of the next decade's reform efforts.

  - -- Expanding choice among public schools can have a dramatic positive impact on students, parents, and educators in troubled urban areas.

  - -- Permitting options among different kinds of public schools is entirely consistent with democratic ideals, including the notion of a common school.

  - -- Not all programs expanding school choice are equally effective.

  - -- Helping parents make informed and thoughtful decisions about schools is vital to any program expanding their options.

  - -- There must be opportunities for educators (especially teachers and building principals) to help design programs from which families can select.

  - -- Actions to expand options can take place at the individual school, district, state, and national levels.

  - -- Business support for legislative change is critical.

  - -- Expanding public school choice can help rural students, not just inner-city youth.

Raywid, M.A. (1989). The Case for Public Schools of Choice. Fastback 283. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 45pp.

- o Author makes a case for public schools of choice based on major strands of evidence supporting the choice idea from the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers.

- o Schools of choice, as used by the author, applies to any type of school, or separate administrative unit within a school, that has

its own personnel (students and teachers) who are affiliated with the program by choice, and has its own separate program.

- Two major types: alternative schools (established as a single program to respond to the unmet needs or interests of particular groups of students, parents, or teachers and found in districts of any size) and magnets (one of several such schools within a district established to achieve desegregation and/or offer quality educational programs around a common theme; tend to be found in large urban districts).

- Three fundamental premises underlie the choice idea: (1) there is no one best school for everybody; (2) it is necessary to provide diversity in school structure and programs in order to accommodate all students and enable them to succeed; and (3) students will perform better and accomplish more in learning environments they have freely chosen than in those in which they are simply assigned.

- Three premises underlie the case for parent choice of school: (1) there are many viable and desirable ways to educate children; (2) there is no one best program that can respond to the diverse educational preferences found in a pluralistic, democratic society; and (3) it is desirable to offer diversity in school programs to meet family value patterns and orientations.

- Schools of choice have positive effects on their teachers and administrators: high morale results when the personal goals of workers dovetail with the formal goals of the organizations in which they work; job satisfaction results when a variety of personal needs are met; teachers are offered more opportunities for self-actualization.

- Two national surveys in the past decade found 1019 magnet school programs and 2500 alternative schools (but estimates indicate the actual total might be three or four times that number).

- Magnet school concept is spreading because of court desegregation orders, as a mechanism for school revitalization, and interest in dropout prevention.

- Choice concept receiving substantial support from politicians (notably governors), business, and the public.

- A 1987 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education showed 71 percent of all adults polled expressed the view that parents should be entitled to select the public schools their children will attend.

- Based on achievement as measured by standardized tests, as well as assessments of students' attitudes toward the school, toward their teachers, and toward education in general, schools of choice are highly successful (evidence from the Alternative Program in State College, Pennsylvania; Metro High School in Chicago; Davis

Alternative Elementary School in Jackson, Mississippi; Village School in Great Neck, New York; Metropolitan Learning Center in Portland, Oregon; and New York City's District 4).

Uchitelle, S. (1989, December). "What it Really Takes to Make School Choice Work." Phi Delta Kappan, (71)3, pp. 301-303.

- To promote a school choice program for purely political reasons is reprehensible; many proponents of choice advocate schemes that are nothing more than sand castles--they sound exciting and look good on paper but their foundation is questionable.
- Choice can work but it must be based on a real commitment by officials and participating families.
- True choice plans will be expensive and complex; they will address the following issues:
  - Who will opt to exercise the privilege to choose and why?
  - What will happen to those students who stay behind?
  - Will competition among schools be valuable?
  - Will open enrollment provide equitable access to all?
  - Will families make choices according to educational needs or for other reasons? And does it matter?
  - Is open enrollment elitist?
  - Will students jump from school to school on a whim, or will they stick with a choice once made?
- An example of a school choice program that is properly designed and offers equal benefits to all students is the one now operating in St. Louis:
  - The program came about because of a court-approved desegregation settlement and not through state law.
  - The program involves all 24 public school districts in the metropolitan area including the city schools and 23 suburban districts.
  - Equitable access is provided to students as long as their transfer does not upset the racial balance of the school they leave or of the school they choose to enter.
  - Complete transportation services are provided free of charge.
  - Districts accepting transfer students receive state funds equal to the per-pupil cost of educating each student.

-- Additional resources are available to help the urban district improve its overall educational quality.

-- Funds are available to improve the school facilities in the urban district.

Wildman, L. (1989, November-December). "Why Parents Support the Concept of Choice." Thrust for Educational Leadership (19)3, pp. 32-34.

- National polls indicate the public favors choice by a wide majority, whereas school administrators and other educators do not.
- Proponents of choice argue that there is no "one best system" of education for all students or all educators.
- Opponents of choice fear the societal consequences of parents and students making such choices: choice runs counter to one of the primary goals of public education--the desire to bring about greater social equity.
- A study conducted on the perceptions of choice found that 70 percent of those surveyed believed parents should be able to choose which public school their children attend.
- The study found that the public wants choice as a parental right but beyond that, the public doesn't think choice will make much of a difference.
- Given the opportunity to choose schools, "teacher quality" was the only factor rated to be more important than the factor which is most often used now--proximity of the school.
- Among those studied who favor choice, about two-thirds favor the voucher system and one-third oppose the involvement of private education in choice.
- Among those studied who oppose choice, two-thirds oppose the voucher system and most of the remainder are neutral.
- In summary, the author contends that choice seems to be more of a political issue than an educational one.

END

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